

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER

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COBBETT'S ENGLISH GRAMMAR.
SECOND EDITION.

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LETTER II.

TO

THE PEOPLE OF BOTLEY.

On the Character and Conduct of their own Parson, BAKER.

*North Hampstead, Long Island,
11, Nov. 1818.*

MY OLD NEIGHBOURS,

IT remains for me now to speak more particularly of BAKER, the Botley Parson. This man, has, I see, published a letter relative to me. He has done it with a view of currying favour with somebody, who, he thinks, may give him something. I should not notice his letter. To expose him would be of no use; but, it may be of use to show *what sort of thing a Parson is*. If his Brethren do not allow him to be a fair specimen, let them *disown* him. That is their affair, not mine. I have the *picture of a Parson* in my hand; and I will hold it up to public view. Parsons have been, and are, the most active agents, the most efficacious tools, in the hands of the Boroughmongers. Under the cloak

of sanctity, they have been the great upholders of bribery, corruption, speculation and oppression. Let us, then, see what the sanctity of *one* of them is. I will unmask one. I will unmask my Botley Parson. Let others unmask theirs. And let us, if it should be necessary, go on, till we have them all painted in their true colours. Remember a *Parson* is not religion. We may hate the former, and love the latter.

The following is Baker's letter, as I find it in the Times News Paper. It is dated, Botley Parsonage, 28th July 1818. I beg you to read it attentively; for, I shall make some remarks upon every part of it.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE
TIMES.

" Sir,

" By mere chance I have just
" seen Mr. Cobbett's Register, dated
" June 20, wherein, amongst his various
" objections to the building of new
" churches, and which objections seem
" only to have been made for the pur-
" pose of venting gross personal
" invectives against the clergy, he
" relates, as facts within his own know-
" ledge, two in particular respecting
" the parish of Botley, which, had they
" been confined, as many of his former
" invectives, to myself alone, I would
" not have deigned to notice; but as
" the knowledge of the real facts may
" tend to prove what degree of credit
" ought to be attached to his writings,
" I conceive I shall be rendering a
" service to the public, as well as an
" act of justice to a noble and exalted
" individual, by sending you the real
" facts, and requesting you to give
" them all the publicity you can.

“ Mr. Cobbett says,—“ I have many
 “ times been at Botley church, when
 “ the congregation, being of a pa-
 “ rish of 6,000 souls, consisted of
 “ the parson, the clerk, a couple of
 “ old men, and myself; and I never
 “ saw the congregation exceed 120
 “ in number, while the Methodist
 “ meeting was as full as it could
 “ hold.” Now, Sir, the parish of
 “ Botley contains about 400 souls,
 “ instead of 6,000, the regular duty
 “ at church is once in the day, and the
 “ morning being the principal time of
 “ attendance in this county, I always
 “ perform the service at that time,
 “ not having any other church, and if
 “ any one attend in the afternoon, I
 “ then read prayers also; and although
 “ the church be situate at the distance
 “ of a mile from the village, and be-
 “ tween two and three miles from some
 “ parts of the parish, although the only
 “ access to the church was, till very
 “ lately, by a path obstructed by very
 “ high stiles, yet if the weather be
 “ favourable, the congregation con-
 “ sists of 120 persons at least, and
 “ more generally 200; and were the
 “ church situate in the village, as the
 “ meeting-house is, it would be by far
 “ too small for the congregation, as it
 “ even now is on particular occasions;
 “ and I do aver that Mr. Cobbett never
 “ was at Botley-church in a morning
 “ with so few persons as he states, let
 “ the weather have been ever so bad:
 “ the case, therefore, stands thus—
 “ Mr. Cobbett’s assertion was intended
 “ to prove that the fullest attendance
 “ at Botley-church was one sixtieth
 “ part of the population, when the
 “ fact is, that the congregation con-
 “ sists at least of a third, and more ge-
 “ nerally of half the population of the
 “ place.

“ So much for the first statement:
 “ now for the second.

“ Mr. Cobbett says, that “ The
 “ Botley parson had his living given
 “ to him by the Earl of Bristol (that
 “ is to say, through that noble
 “ Lord’s interest, as it is called),
 “ and the ground of the gift, as the

“ parson used publicly to boast,
 “ was his father’s election interest
 “ in the borough of Great Yar-
 “ mouth.” Mr. Cobbett never
 “ could have afforded me a higher gra-
 “ tification than he has now done, viz.
 “ the inexpressible delight which a
 “ grateful heart must ever feel in pro-
 “ claiming the truly noble and bene-
 “ ficent act of that great man—an act,
 “ the knowledge of which would have
 “ been confined to the breasts of a
 “ few only, had it not been for this
 “ statement. The Earl of Bristol did
 “ present me with the living of Botley,
 “ not on account of my father or the
 “ town of Yarmouth, the freedom of
 “ which he inherited by birth-right.
 “ He was a Fellow of Pembroke-hall,
 “ Cambridge, and the preferment he
 “ held as long as he lived he acquired
 “ in virtue of his fellowship. Neither
 “ with my father, nor with the town
 “ of Yarmouth had the Earl of Bristol
 “ any connexion whatever, either di-
 “ rectly or indirectly; he gave me the
 “ living because a representation was
 “ made to him that I was a young man
 “ who had experienced unkind treat-
 “ ment and neglect where I had every
 “ reason to expect the reverse; who
 “ had an increasing young family
 “ with a very slender income to main-
 “ tain them, and that depending upon
 “ the performance of the daily duty of
 “ a large parish, which was deemed
 “ too laborious for the weak state of
 “ health in which I was at that time;
 “ who had no prospect of getting any
 “ thing more in the Church, and who
 “ never could possess the means of
 “ making any other return than that
 “ of a heart replete with gratitude.
 “ These were the reasons which caused
 “ his Lordship to confer on me the liv-
 “ ing of Botley, and of adding another
 “ to the list of beneficent acts he is un-
 “ ceasingly performing. Such is the
 “ deed Mr. Cobbett has unwittingly
 “ brought forth to public view:—a
 “ deed which will redound to the Earl
 “ of Bristol’s honour, and will with
 “ many other of his generous acts be
 “ transmitted from father to son for

"generations to come, and will be had
"in remembrance, when the existence
"of such a person as Mr. Cobbett will
"either be sunk in oblivion, or held
"in abhorrence.

"Now, when assertions like the
"foregoing are so repeatedly made by
"Mr. Cobbett, without any notice
"being taken of them, the undiscern-
"ing, and those who are totally igno-
"rant of his real character and prin-
"ciples, may think that he has some
"grounds for such assertions; since
"they cannot conceive a person of
"such unblushing effrontery and ma-
"lignity, as to publish as facts things
"which he knows to be the reverse.
"Such persons know not Mr. Cobbett.
"Had they had the opportunity of
"knowing him that I have had, they
"would have been shocked to perceive
"a person, possessing the talents he
"does, employing them in the gratifi-
"cation of petty spleen, ferreting out
"the specks and the frailties to which
"human nature ever was and ever will
"be liable, for the sole purpose of ex-
"citing the appetites of his readers;
"for he well knows, that without those
"*petits morceaux*, they would have
"been cloyed long ago.

"I can with the greatest truth de-
"clare, that from myself and every
"branch of my family Mr. Cobbett
"has experienced the kindest treat-
"ment. I wish I could say we had re-
"ceived the same from him. He
"knows that when he challenged the
"whole body of the clergy, and at last
"myself by name, to refute, or (to
"use his own words) to produce an
"antidote to the third part of Paine's
"*Age of Reason*, that I pledged my-
"self to produce such antidote, and
"principally from his own writings
"against Paine in America; but in-
"sisted on this preliminary, that the
"*Register*, which had been the ve-
"hicle of poison, should also be the
"vehicle of the antidote, and that
"he should in the ensuing *Register*
"publish a letter I had addressed to
"him on the first appearance of his
"apostacy, warning him of the dan-

"gerous tendency of the principles
"he then avowed. This he declined,
"and finding that the object of these
"challenges was only to promote the
"sale of his work, which was then de-
"creasing, I was silent, and should
"have remained so, had it not been
"for this gross attack upon my noble
"patron during his absence; but per-
"ceiving by the public papers that
"Mr. Cobbett either was returned or
"was about to return, and that the
"most insidious and artful means
"were using to poison the minds of
"the public, and to excite them to
"discontent by the propagation of the
"greatest falshoods veiled under the
"the mask of truth, I conceived it to
"be a duty incumbent on me to ex-
"pose such falshoods; and not to
"shrink from so doing, through the
"fear of abuse, calumny, or misrepre-
"sentation. Relying on my aversion
"to bring myself forward from a life
"of seclusion and privacy into public
"notice, Mr. Cobbett has dared to
"publish the facts I have noticed;
"but now he has obliged me to come
"forward, I may perhaps, as oppor-
"tunity offers, and leisure be afforded
"me, give the public some information
"respecting his motives, his principles,
"and his actions, since few have pos-
"sessed the means I have of so doing.
"The insertion of this letter in your
"valuable paper will much oblige
"your obedient servant,

"RICHARD BAKER.

"*Botley Parsonage, July 28.*"

Now, first, as to facts. You know
this man's character as to the worth of
his word. But, he here accuses me of
a *falshood*. In the article, to which he
refers, he says that I stated the popu-
lation of the parish at *six thousand*. My
statement was in *figures*. It was ob-
viously a mistake of the press, or of the
pen. A nought too many was put down,
either by the printer or by me. It was
600, and not 6,000. This *must* have
been a mistake; for, it was impossible
that I should wish to expose myself to
a charge of falshood, in a case where
detection was so easy. I must have

known, that all you would be able to prove the falshood, and that the whole nation would be able to prove it; because the amount of the population of the parish is stated in a book, made out of the actual returns of the parishes, which returns were laid before parliament, and printed only a few years ago. So that it *must* have been a mere error in printing, or in writing; and this, stupid as he is, the Parson *must have known*.

Quite the contrary as to his assertion, that "the parish of Botley contains about 400 (four hundred) souls." This is a *falshood*: he *knew* the fact to be false, and he stated it deliberately and for a bad purpose. It is false, because in the aforementioned returns, made to the Houses of Parliament, the population of the parish of Botley is stated at 624 (six hundred and twenty four) souls. So that, you see, I put down the round number of 600, and left out the 24. But what has this *parson done*? He has asserted, that the population amounts to about 400 (four hundred), when he must have known the contrary. For (and I beg you to mark the fact) *he himself signed the parish return*, made to the House of Commons! The return was made in the year *one thousand eight hundred and eleven*. So that, in that year, he must have deliberately signed a *false return*; or he must now have made deliberately a *false statement*. Verily a most Reverend Gentleman; a most "*spiritual person*."

You see the object of the falshood, he knew the population was *six hundred*, or thereabouts. If he had said this, every reader would have instantly perceived, that I, or my printer, had made a *mistake* as to the *figures*; that one or the other of us had put down a nought too many. This did not answer his purpose; and therefore he said *four* instead of *six*. Therefore, he tells a lie for the purpose of making me out to be a liar. Verily a most reverend *spiritual person*!

Now, as to the attendance at the

Church. You see, he does not deny the fact of his congregation consisting, frequently, of *only two or three persons*. He does not deny this; because he knows, that *you all know the fact to be true*. But, what does he say? What is his shuffle? Why, that the "*regular duty at church is once in the day*, and that, in *Hampshire*, the "*morning being the principal time of attendance*, he always performs the "*service at that time*, and that, *if any one attend in the afternoon*, he then "*reads prayers also*." What, then! he has dropped the *afternoon*, has he? He is very ignorant, but he must know, that *twice a day* is the regular duty, and in one, at least, of the week-days besides. And, all the time that I lived at Botley, service was performed *twice* of a Sunday. Indeed, how are many of the people to go to the church at all, unless they go in the afternoon? How are farmers' maid servants to go; and how are shepherds and many of the rest of the men and boys to go? But, at any rate, while I lived at Botley there was service regularly twice a day. However, to leave him no shuffling ground at all, I referred to the *morning*; and I again state, that I have been at church in the morning, when the whole congregation consisted of the parson, the clerk, myself and one or two others. So that, upon this subject he tells a *mass of falshoods*. I used to tell him, that if I had the command of his pulpit, I would soon empty the Methodist Meeting House, to which he once answered, that, as long as the Methodist Parson could not take any part of his *tithes*, he might, for what he cared, have as many of the *people* as he would: herein verifying the old charge against the Popish Priests; that they seized the *fleece* and let the Devil take the flock. He is wholly incapable of writing a sermon fit to be read to any body; but, he was too lazy to copy his sermons, and I said you have often seen him read from a printed and bound volume. Into these sermons he often worked a passage of his own in order to make an

attack upon any of his parishioners who had offended him. He did this once to make an attack upon two of James Hammerton's daughters, who, although they did not live in the parish, used, on account of their distance from their own church, to attend at his. This was a thing which he frequently did.

Now, as to the cause of his promotion, the story he told was this: that Lord Bristol was greatly behold- ing to his father for his exertions in the election at Yarmouth. That his Lordship had promised his father a living for the son. That Lord Bristol had, some time before, given a living to a man whom Addington (then Minister) wished to provide for. That Addington had got the same sort of thing done for a man whom the Duke of Portland wished to provide for. And that, when the living of Botley, which belonged to the Duke, became vacant, he paid it away to Addington, who repaid Lord Bristol with it, who gave it in payment to Baker's father, who made it over to the son. This was his story. And, as we have no evidence other than that furnished by himself, let us see, whether it be not likely that the story was true. In the first place he acknowledges, that his father was a voter at Yarmouth. How should I have known that, except from himself? In the next place, he acknowledges, that Lord Bristol gave him his living, and you all know, that the Duke of Portland is the patron of the living. How should I have known any thing about Lord Bristol's giving the living, except from himself? He acknowledges, that Lord Bristol did not even know him, when he got him the living, but got it him upon the ground of a hearsay account of his being a young man, who had been un- kindly treated by his friends, and who had a young and increasing family. Indeed! This was a singular thing. It was very wonderful indeed. Much too wonderful to be credited without a great deal better evidence than the bare word of a man, upon whom I have

just proved a wilful, a deliberate, a barefaced falsehood. What an idiot it must be, to say that this noble act of Lord Bristol will be transmitted from father to son from generation to generation! Let us hope that the pa- tronage and the cause of it will soon be swept away; and that nothing will be remembered belonging to the affair but the shuffling and falsifying of this "*spiritual person*."

Thus, then, we have done with the moral truth of the Botley parson, for the present, which, however, I shall further illustrate by-and-by. Let us now come to his religiousness. He says, that he was anxious to answer *Mr. Paine's Age of Reason*, and that I, who, he insinuates, was a favourer of that work, refused to let him do it in my Register. In the first place, I never in my life wrote a word in favour of the *Age of Reason*, which I never even read. In the next place, I was not bound to fill up my Register with this man's writing; but, I offered to have his answer published in a pam- phlet at my own expence. I will relate the facts, and then you will see, how shamefully false the parson is here again. A Mr. EATON, an old man, had been punished, with great cruelty, for publishing the Third Part of Mr. Paine's *Age of Reason*. The Attorney General, Gibbs, and the Judge, El- lenborough, had told the Jury, that this publication was very dangerous to the people, and that "its consequences, "if it TOOK ROOT, in the minds of "those by whom it was perused, would "be DREADFUL INDEED."

This being the case, said I, in my Register of the 13. June, 1812, "I "think, that we have a right to expect "from our Clergy, that which will "prevent this pernicious plant from "taking root. Nay, I think, that every "churchman has a right to call upon "the minister of his own parish for an "antidote against this deadly poison; "and, accordingly, I hereby call upon "mine, who, though I am absent from "him, will, I am sure, not think me "out of the pale of his care, especially

“when he considers that I am, here,
 “in the very focus, as it were, of
 “these dreadful publications. But,
 “in making this call upon my pastor,
 “I beg leave to apprize him, that I
 “shall be convinced by nothing short
 “of a confutation arising out of *fair*
 “*reasoning*, or *clearly established*
 “*facts*; and that mere *reproach* on
 “either Messrs. Paine or Eaton, or
 “on both together, will have no
 “weight at all with me. To show that
 “I am in earnest, and that I really am
 “anxious to see the subject discussed,
 “I promise the gentleman, to whom
 “I now address myself (I mean, of
 “course, the Rector of Botley), that
 “I will, at my own expence, cause
 “to be published whatever he may
 “write to me in answer to Paines’
 “Third Part of the Age of Reason,
 “provided it does not exceed in bulk
 “twice that of the work to be an-
 “swered; and I will, if the Rector of
 “Botley should decline the invitation,
 “do the same with respect to an answer
 “by *any other Clergyman of the*
 “*Church of England*; after which
 “offer, I shall, I hope, hear no more of
 “the *danger* to be apprehended from
 “Mr. Eaton’s publication, for here I
 “pledge myself to circulate the an-
 “tidote.”

Now, what could I do more fair
 than this? The Botley Parson wrote
 to me, and told me that *he* would fur-
 nish the answer; and I announced to
 the public, that the answer was
 coming, and that I had the satisfac-
 tion to say, that it was *coming from*
the pen of my own pastor. This was
 done in the following words: “I have
 “received a letter from the Rector of
 “Botley, who, I have the satisfaction
 “to say, has authorized me to state,
 “that “he promises to give the pub-
 “lic, through the medium I have
 “offered, a sufficient antidote to the
 “deadly poison, whose pernicious
 “effects I have shewn myself so
 “anxious to have counteracted.” It
 “would seem, however, from another
 “passage of his letter, that he supposes
 “this “medium” to be the *Political*

Register. That is not the one in-
 tended. I propose making the pro-
 mised publication in the form of a
 PAMPHLET, and that for three
 reasons; *first*, because the per-
 formance would naturally exceed
 the limits of the Register, and must
 be greatly injured in its effect by
 being sent forth in small divisions;
second, because it would be in a
 form different from that of the work
 to which it would be an answer,
 and, of course, could not be bound
 up and preserved along with it;
 and, *third*, because, as the great law
 characters would prosecute me for
 publishing Mr. Paine’s book in the
 Register, it would be cowardly,
 inconsistent, and stupid to publish
 an *answer* to it in the Register; it
 would be *discussion all on one side*,
 to which I am, and always shall be,
 I hope, a mortal enemy.—For these
 reasons my intention, and, indeed,
 my resolution, is, to cause the an-
 swer to be published in a pamphlet
 of the octavo form, and, that the
 Antidote may come as closely as
 possible on the heels of the Poison,
 I further intend, that the former
 shall issue from the very same shop
 that the latter shall issue from. In
 short, I intend that the answer shall
 be sold by Mr. *Eaton*, at his shop
 in Ave Maria Lane, Ludgate Hill,
 by which means Mr. Eaton himself
 will be made instrumental in the
 answering of what he has been pil-
 loryed and imprisoned for publish-
 ing. That he will be quite ready to do
 this I cannot doubt; for, otherwise,
 he would be unworthy of the cha-
 racter of an assertor of the *Liberty*
of the Press; and *this is the very*
thing that I am contending for.
 Mr. Eaton calls his shop “The
 Magazine for Truth and Good
 sense;” and a better title he could
 not have chosen. To know what is
 true and what is false, we must use
 our *reason*; we must *enquire* and
 discuss; and, of course, we must
 hear BOTH SIDES. From this
 Magazine of Truth and Good Sense

"I shall, therefore, cause the answer
 "of the Rector of Botley to issue;
 "and I will not fail to have it printed
 "in a manner commensurate with the
 "respect naturally due to its author.
 "As a further inducement for him to
 "render his answer complete, I pledge
 "myself to cause copies of it to be
 "sent to the United States of Ame-
 "rica, where Mr. Paine's book has
 "been published these three years
 "past; and, I undertake to do ge-
 "nerally, every thing in my power to
 "circulate it; that is to say, as far as
 "it is likely that the work of Mr.
 "Paine has extended. I shall now
 "quit the subject for the present,
 "with a promise to inform my readers
 "of the progress of the answer from
 "the moment that it shall come into
 "my hands."

Now, my good neighbours, what
 could I do more than this? The
 Parson is guilty of a shameful fals-
 hood, in saying, that my Register had
 been the "*vehicle of the poison*;" for,
 never in my whole life, had I pub-
 lished a word from Mr. PAINE's
 Age of Reason; and, as I said before
 I had never, and have not now, *read* a
 word of that work. I have looked
 into it; but I never thought it worth
 my while to read any part of it. What
 a falsehood is it, then, to say, that my
 Register had been the vehicle of the
 poison; and, what a *reverend* and
 "*spiritual person*" this parson must
 be!

In the next Register, I had, upon this
 subject, to make the following com-
 munication to my readers. "Mr.

"EATON and Paine's Age of Reason.
 "What I have now to communicate
 "under this head gives me singular
 "mortification.—In my last I an-
 "nounced, that the Rector of Botley
 "had authorized me to promise, in his
 "name, an answer to the work, which
 "the Attorney General (Gibbs) de-
 "clared to be calculated to produce
 "consequences DREADFUL in the
 "EXTREME." But, since the pub-
 "lication of my last Register, the
 "Rector has informed me, that he will
 "not write an answer, lest by its being
 "published at Mr. Eaton's shop,
 "he, the Rector, "should contri-
 "bute to the MERCENERY views
 "of the CONVICTED vender
 "thereof."—I will leave the English
 "reader (and I am sure I safely may)
 "to form his opinion of the *language*
 "in which this excuse is conveyed;
 "but, as to the excuse itself, it must
 "not and shall not, serve the purpose
 "for which it manifestly appears to
 "be intended; for, if the Rector will
 "write an answer to the book in
 "question, I will pay all the expences
 "of printing and publication; it shall
 "be published at whatever bookseller's
 "in London the Rector may choose:
 "that bookseller shall keep the ac-
 "counts of receipts and outgoings;
 "if there be any *loss* upon the publi-
 "cation, I will sustain it; and, if any
 "gain, it shall be given to build a
 "cottage, or to buy a fat hog, for any
 "poor man in the parish of Botley
 "whom the Rector himself may name.
 "—I wait for his reply."

Was it possible for me to go further

than this? Was not this giving a proof of my sincerity in calling on the church for an answer? What was the Parson's conduct now? He shuffled; he equivocated; and the following article from me, published on the 11th of July, 1812, closed the history of my fruitless endeavours to goad our lazy and fat priests into open and manly war against a work, which a poor aged man had been cruelly punished for publishing, and which punishment had been grounded upon the assertion, that the principles of the work, if they took root in the minds of the people, must produce MOST DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES.

"Mr. EATON and Paine's *Age of Reason*.—I have received nothing from the Rector of Botley, in answer to my last notification. I hope he does not mean to back out in the way there mentioned. I beg leave to remind him, that Mr. Eaton has been sentenced to 22 months imprisonment and to stand once in the pillory for publishing the book in question; that the Attorney General (Gibbs), in calling for punishment upon the head of this old man, asserted, that the principles contained in the book, if suffered to take root in the minds of those who read it, must produce "consequences DREADFUL in the "EXTREME." That many hundreds of the book have been published is certain; that these copies of the book have been read is also certain; how, then, are these extremely dreadful consequences to be prevented, except by an answer to the

book? And, have we twenty thousand Clergymen, and will no one of them attempt to give us this answer? Do they not think it worth while to answer a work, the consequences of which, if suffered to go unanswered, must be dreadful in the extreme? Many of them are pretty constantly engaged in writing reviews and political pamphlets. This may be very proper. It may also be proper for them to be the foremost in all court-addresses; but, surely, they ought, then, to look to this "dreadful" work of Paine.—They have been loud enough in their alarms about "popery." They have cried out that the "Church is in danger" from that. But, what do they mean by the Church? Do they mean the tithes, the corn rents, the life-holds, the glebes, the man-sions, the woods, the manors, the cloisters, and the palaces? Do they call these "the Church?" If they mean the congregations; if they mean their morals and souls, we have the assertion of the Attorney General, the charge of the Judge, the verdict of the Special Jury, and the punishment of Mr. Eaton, to produce in proof of the Church being in real danger from the suffering of Mr. Paine's book to go unanswered. Is it, therefore, to be believed, that twenty thousand Clergymen will leave it unanswered?—Since writing the above, I have received a letter from the Rector of Botley, in which he tells me that I gave, last week, wrong information to my readers,

"respecting his intention. I there
 "said, that he had informed me, that
 "he would not write an answer, lest,
 "by its being published at Mr. Eaton's
 "shop (as I had proposed), he, the Rec-
 "tor, should contribute to the "MER-
 "CENARY views of the CON-
 "VICTED vender thereof."—Where-
 "upon, as the reader will recollect,
 "I offered to have the answer pub-
 "lished at my own expence, at any
 "shop that the Rector might choose;
 "to sustain the *loss*, if any, and, if
 "any *gain*, to let the Rector himself
 "choose a man amongst his parish-
 "ioners on whom to bestow it.
 "Even this, however, does not, it
 "seems, meet the approbation of the
 "Rector; who now tells me, that he,
 "in his former note, did not say, that
 "he would *write no answer*, but that,
 "for the reason stated, "he refused
 "accepting such a medium, and re-
 "solved to adopt that sort of publi-
 "cation, which he might deem most
 "likely to answer his views: viz.
 "the exposure of falshood, and re-
 "futation of blasphemy."—It is
 "very true, that, at the time of writ-
 "ing his former note, the Rector
 "might have formed this *resolution*;
 "but, it is equally true, that he *did*
 "not let a word drop to me about it.
 "He merely told me, that he would
 "not publish through the medium that
 "I had mentioned.—Let us, however,
 "understand one another now, if we
 "can. He says, he *resolved* to pub-
 "lish, though not from Mr. Eaton's
 "shop; but, he does not now say, that
 "he *will*, or that he *will not*, accept

"of my last offer, to publish from any
 "shop that he may choose, and to
 "apply the gain, if any, to the pur-
 "pose of making a poor family happy.
 "To be sure I have no right to call
 "upon him to put his work into my
 "hands, or to apply the profits of it
 "in any particular way; but, *he ac-*
 "*cepted of my offer*, and authorized
 "me to promise, in his name, an an-
 "swer to Paine's work. However, a
 "little matter shall not turn me from
 "my point. He *resolved*, it seems, to
 "publish an answer in some way or
 "other. Very well, then, here we
 "have his resolution, *when or how* he
 "means to act upon it he does not say;
 "but, that he shall not want *remind-*
 "*ing* of this resolution the public may
 "rest assured.—What I have further
 "to say upon this subject will astonish
 "the reader.—The truth is, that the
 "Rector of Botley, who, one would
 "have thought, would have received
 "with eagerness and delight an invi-
 "tation to shew his zeal in defence of
 "that religion, to be a supporter of
 "which he had, at his ordination, de-
 "clared that he *felt himself called by*
 "*the Holy Ghost*; one would have
 "thought, that he would have hastened
 "to express his gratitude to me for
 "having given him such an occasion to
 "prove himself worthy of his calling, to
 "show that he was sincere in his so-
 "lemn declaration, and to prevent those
 "extremely dreadful consequences"
 "for having attempted to produce
 "which Mr. Eaton was sentenced to
 "a long imprisonment and to stand-
 "ing in the pillory; but, instead of

"expressions of kindness and of gra-
 "titude, I did, in fact, receive from
 "my pastor expressions of *anger* and
 "*resentment*. He has written me
 "two letters since, still rising, I think,
 "in acrimoniousness of style. In
 "every letter, he calls upon me, in a
 "most *menacing tone*, to publish, not
 "only these letters, but *others*, which
 "have passed between us a long while
 "before a word was said about Mr.
 "EATON or Paine's Age of Reason.
 "I hereby inform him, that, at pre-
 "sent, I do not see sufficient cause for
 "my doing this; but, that, if he does
 "see sufficient cause for *his* doing it,
 "he has my full liberty to make the
 "publication in any manner that he
 "may think proper, provided he pub-
 "lish my letter as well as his own
 "letters, and also the parts of the Re-
 "gister, to which the correspondence
 "refers.—If he does this, *I will never*
 "*even publish a single word in the*
 "*way of answer to his publication*,
 "but will leave the world to form its
 "judgment even upon his own state-
 "ment.—After this I shall, I hope,
 "receive no more menacing calls for
 "publication.—The Rector manifestly
 "has kept copies of his letters. If,
 "however, it should happen to be
 "otherwise, I shall readily furnish him
 "with copies."

Thus ended this affair, and now,
 my good neighbours, judge you be-
 tween me and this Parson. You all
 well know, that I have never med-
 dled with the subject of *religion*, un-
 less where I have found the priests
 poking their noses into *politics*, with

which they ought to have so little to
 do, and which they ought not, surely,
 to meddle with for the purpose of
 supporting speculation, bribery and
 corruption. In 1802 I heard a Par-
 son, who was *owner of a Borough*,
 say, that he had offered the Ministry
 two seats in exchange for a *dignity*
in the church, that is to say, a *Deanery*
 or a *Bishoprick*. These were all
 pledged, and he sold his seats to two
 private speculators. This exchange
 would have included bribery, corrup-
 tion, perjury, simony and sacrilege; and
 yet these men call upon us to *respect*
 them. They have the audacity to
 identify themselves with the religion
 of Jesus Christ; and, they call us
blasphemers, and punish us, if we ap-
 pear to doubt of the fact.

On his account I should not have
 noticed Baker. My object is to give
 a *specimen*, or, at least, an *instance*,
 of what English Parsons are; and,
 though few of them are so bad as he,
 still they may all be as bad, and keep
 their offices and incomes in defiance
 of their virtuous and insulted pa-
 rishioners. Considering him as a
 specimen, I will go on to complete
 his character. The facts, which I am
 about to state, will only remind you
 of what most of you already know;
 but, they are worth stating as curious
 instances of meanness and dishonesty.

In 1809 or 1810, he sold me a
 quantity of trussed straw by *weight*;
 and, he put a parcel of *wet straw* into
 the middle of each truss! My then
 servant, George Compton, detected
 this, showed it me, and will, if neces-

sary, prove it upon his oath. I am not now upon the spot; but Compton is an honest man, and, will, if asked, speak the truth.

In 1813 or 1814, perhaps a year sooner or later, Baker took a cow and calf a month old to sell at Southampton Fair. Mr. Young, of Moore Court, came up to him, and asked the price of the cow, and asked *whether the calf was her own calf*. Baker answered in the affirmative. "Well, then," said Mr. Young, "she is the most surprising cow in the world; for I sold her four months ago with a calf about the same age which I know was her own!" One would think, that this was enough to dash any human being; but, the Parson, calling Mr. Young aside, said, "I beg you'll not mention it in the fair; for if you do, you will spoil my sale." Thus was this "*spiritual person*" going to sell a cow almost dry, as a cow which had just calved. Baker had bought the cow at a former fair, or market, and did not know that Mr. Young was the owner. Mr. JAMES WARNER, Jun. was present with Mr. Young, when this knavery was discovered.

In 1814 Baker was, on a Sunday Evening, horse-whipped by Mr. Rickets, the surgeon, who was then one of the Churchwardens. This whipping took place in the open street of the village. Baker took shelter in the house of Mr. James Warner, Senior, who conducted the Parson home, in the dark, to screen him from another whipping, with which Mr. Rickets menaced him. He indicted Mr. Rickets, who was tried at the Quarter Sessions, and *fined fifty shillings*, with an observation from the Chairman, that the bad character and conduct of the Parson was the only cause of the lenity of the punishment, and which bad character and conduct were amply proved upon the trial.

In 1816, at a Turnpike-Meeting, at Botley, where he and I were, along with others, assembled as Trustees (on our *oaths*, mind), he, in the most

positive manner denied, that he had given a certain order to James Hammerton. Hammerton asserted that he had. The Parson said: "Upon my soul, Gentlemen, I did not, and Hammerton, you tell a lie." Hammerton rummaged about amongst some bits of dirty paper, which he had in his hat, and, at last, out he brought the identical order in the Parson's own hand writing. Any other man that I ever saw in my life would have blushed; but this Priest kept his colour as steadily as a stone. The falsehood was told for the purpose of injuring Hammerton, who is as honest and inoffensive a man as ever lived.

But, at this meeting he did something still more infamous. He insinuated, that I had *secretly instigated* Hammerton to enter, as Surveyor, into a field of my excellent neighbour, Mr. John Gater. Hammerton, though a remarkably mild and timid man, filled with indignation at this abominable attempt to sow discord between me and Mr. Gater, said: "No, Mr. Baker! Mr. Cobbett never opened his lips to me on the subject; but *you did*, Sir, and told me to be *sure to keep it secret*." There were present the three Messrs. Gaters and some other Gentlemen, every one of whom, except the Parson and me, hung down his head. They were ashamed for him, who felt no shame for himself. I sat and looked him hard in the face; and, after a short silence, I exclaimed: "no! not even now the most feeble tinge of a blush!"

I could fill a volume with anecdotes of the meanness and dishonesty of this man. In more than one instance has he been engaged in personal affrays with his parishioners. At one of those *whose soul he had the care of*, he ran with a pitch-fork, and received a pair of black-eyes as his reward. By many has he been ordered out of their houses, and by many more he has been accused of falsehood to his face. Mr. WARNER, Junior, told him in the open street that Dubber the Smith's

word was worth more than his oath. Which, indeed, was perfectly true, for Dubber was an honest man.

And this, my good neighbours, is a "spiritual person" is it? This is a "Reverend Divine"? This is a preacher of peace and good-will amongst men? This is a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? This is a man, who has most solemnly declared, while the sacramental bread and wine were yet sticking to his lips, that he verily believed himself called by the *Holy Ghost* to take upon him the care of souls and to bring strayed sheep into the fold of the Lord!

Let me now leave his *morality* to the judgment of my readers in general, with this observation, that every fact that I have stated, can be proved by witnesses now living; and, then, as the finisher of his character, let us see what he is in *religion*.

You will observe, that he pretends to feel great horror at the contents of Mr. PAINE's book on the Age of Reason, which, as I understand, is a book, which denies the divinity of Jesus Christ, and treats the Bible very contemptuously. Well, now mark Baker and were riding to Southampton by the old road, in a May-morning, in 1803 or 1809. It was very early. The morning was remarkably beautiful. The banks, on the sides of the road began to be bespangled with flowers. The hawthorn bloom was just pushing out of the buds. The birds were all singing most sweetly. We were riding gently down the hill between General Stibbert's park and Mount-Bevis

grove, which echoed and re-echoed with the voices of innumerable birds. "These pretty creatures," said I, "Baker, are excellent patterns for you. They are very zealous in singing the praises of their Maker." These were not the words, I dare say; but I said something of the sort. "Aye," said he, "but if God sustain all these, what became of them while God was dead?" From this he went on to say, that the ATHANASIAN CREED was nonsense; and, that he was of Mr. FRENCH's opinion, and did not believe that Christ was any more the Son of God than he was. I told him to hold his tongue; for, that he did not know who might hear him. "Poh!" said he, "there is nobody but that old woman" (who was in a cottage garden), "and she knows no more what we are talking about than the birds do." Now, I will not say, that the words were precisely these; but for their *substance* and *meaning* I vouch, and am, at any time, ready to swear to the truth of what I say.

The subject was wholly new to me. I had never thought about doctrinal points of religion; and, I do not know that men ought to be censured for their disbelief of the Trinity. But, I know well, that men ought to be censured for *hypocrisy*. However, this fact I should not even now have thought it right to mention, were it not notorious to you, that Baker's own Churchwarden, Mr. RICKETS, distinctly, and in writing, signed and sworn to, accused him to the Archdea-

con at the Visitation, of expressing his disbelief in the divinity of Christ. This was, I think, in 1814; and, surprising to say, the Archdeacon told the Churchwarden, that he *could not take cognizance of the information!*

I always thought, that the Visitation was intended for the purpose of examining into the state of religion in the several parishes within the hundred, or district; that it was intended to check abuses; to see that the church, the church-yard, and all belonging to the church were kept in due repair; that the religious duties were duly performed; that the children were taught the catechism and that they *communicated*; that the priest, or clergyman, demeaned himself properly; and that the people duly attended the church. These are the pretended purposes of the Visitations; but, though the parishes pay dearly for them; and though a sermon is preached upon the occasion, how scandalously these purposes are neglected, the parish of Botley can tell.

Thus, there is no *redress*, no *remedy*, though the wrong continually admits of undeniable proof. This Baker, though notoriously he is all, and far more than all, that I have described him to be, holds his living and pockets between four and five hundred guineas a year, in despite of you. And thus will it be and must it be, as long as the Borough-mongering system shall last. To this accused cause you can directly trace your being scourged by this Parson, who is worse than a third-day ague; worse than a constant tooth-

ache, worse than the most painful and most loathsome disease.

If you could, as the people in America can, have your own choice, would you suffer such a man to be your teacher? The fact of the contrary exists in proof in this very case. At the time when Baker was *forced upon you*, you wished to have another person. Mr. GAUNTLET, a man of learning, talent, industry, zeal and piety was your *curate*, under the late Parson. When he died, the parish, almost unanimously *petitioned* the Duke of Portland to put Mr. Gauntlet in his place. But, to this petition the Duke turned a deaf ear; and Baker had the living for the reasons stated above.

Thus, you see, that, in this very case, it is the *Borough-mongering*, which has imposed this man on you; and, what mischiefs he has done you, you only can tell. Do you believe, that, if Mr. Gauntlet had remained any of those scandalous scenes would have taken place which I have noticed above? Do you wish your children to be religious? How can you expect it, while this man is the Parson? Do you wish them to respect the Parson? How can they respect him? Is it possible, that they can pay any serious attention to his words? Is it possible that they should not doubt of his sincerity when he recommends good conduct? Is it possible, that they should have a reverence either for his calling or his precepts?

When you see the true causes of this man's getting his living, and con-

sider, that it is to similar causes that the far greater part of the Parsons have to ascribe their livings, you will cease to wonder at the furious violence of the Parsons against all those, who seek for a *Reform*. We seek, in that Reform, to put an end to *bribery* and *corruption*; to a great deal of *strife*, *drunkenness*, villainy of all sorts, and especially *false-swearing*. We seek to put an end to *public robbery*, *unjust wars*, and that waste of the people's earnings, which produces *misery*, *thieving*, *murder* and *crimes* of all sorts. We seek to put an end to beggary, and to make plenty as great and crimes as rare as they are in America. We seek to make men good and peaceable, to prevent youth from falling into those temptations, which want creates, and which, by leading children into crimes, wring the hearts of, and send with sorrow to the grave, so many tender and virtuous parents.

Now, these being the manifest objects of a Reform of the Parliament. It being manifest that such a Reform has a natural tendency to effect these objects in a greater or less degree. No man ever having shown that it is likely that any evil could be produced by a Reform. Our enemies never having been able to show that the thing sought could possibly have a bad end. This being the case, is it not natural to conclude, that *Clergymen ought all to be on our side*? Yet, they are against us almost to a man; and not only against us, but are more bitter in their hostility than any

other part of the hosts, against whom we have to contend. If we came and openly declared that our object was to introduce and support all sorts of villainy and to cause crimes of all sorts to be committed, they could not possibly detest us more than they now do.

This conduct in them is, upon the face of it, so monstrously unnatural, it is so directly opposite to the usual effects, produced by similar means, in men's minds, that we must seek for some great, strange, over-ruling and monstrous cause. That cause is, that, instead of having their livings bestowed upon them for their *learning* and *piety*, they receive them as the wages of something connected with the all-corrupting Borough System. They know this well; and, therefore, they uphold that system with all their might; and they fly like tygers at all those who assail it.

Baker, for instance, knows well, that, if learning and piety were required in a Parson, no Parson would be. He knows, that he got his living by the will of a boroughmonger; and, of course, that he would lose it, if the Borough System were at an end. And, knowing these things, he does all in his power to assist that tottering system. It is impossible, that, if the parliament were what it ought to be, such a man as Baker should be a Parson. If he were in this country, he would hardly get a place as groom, the only thing that, as far as I can imagine, he is fit for. Would any congregation choose such

a man for a *Minister*? I really and sincerely believe, that, if Baker were in this country, he must be amongst the lowest of labourers. What a thing, then, is it, that such a man should be the *Rector* of a parish in England! *Rector* means *Governor*. That is to say, in this case, the man who has the *spiritual government* of a parish. And, is not this a pretty man to have the spiritual rule of a parish!

The remedy of this evil is the putting it in the power of the people themselves, or, of some other persons, chosen by the people; putting it in the power, in short, of some just persons to choose the Ministers of the Gospel; and, therefore, it is impossible, that this remedy should be applied without a Reform of the parliament. When Popery was put an end to in England, one of the great grounds of the Reformation was, that the Clergy did not attend to their duty. It was alledged, that the rascally Monks took the tithes, but did not perform the duties which the tithes were given for. It was urged in reproach of them, that they sheared the flock but gave it no spiritual food; or, at least, that they most grossly neglected their duty. This was one of the principal grounds, upon which the Reformers of that day proceeded to put down the Papal power and to take away the tithes and lands from the Monks.

Well, then, what a shame is it, that similar neglect of duty should be suffered now! At the time, when the

Popish Clergy were turned out, care was taken (as it was thought) that the *new Clergy* should attend to *their duty*; that they should, at least, be pretty generally *present* to take care of the souls, which they had vowed to God they believed themselves called by the Holy Ghost to take care of. In order to make them *reside* on their benefices, it was provided by law, in the twenty first year of the reign of Henry the Eighth, which was the year 1529, that, if any beneficed Clergyman (with certain exceptions) should be absent from his living *one month at a time in any year, or two months at several times* in one year, he should forfeit *ten pounds* for every such offence, one half of the sum forfeited to go to the king, and one half to the informer.

This was very reasonable; for, surely, it was not *just*, that these men should receive so much money, have such fat *livings*, and *live away* from them. Well; in 1800; in that year, Pitt being Prime Minister, there was a gentleman, whose name, I believe, was *Williams*, who took the pains to hunt up a whole flock of these sable-coloured and reverend "spiritual persons", whom the Holy Ghost, after having called to take care of souls, after having called to watch over the fold, had been unable to *keep at their posts*. This gentleman, therefore, with the law in his hand, *sued* whole bands of them in the courts of *justice*, according to that law.

"Well", you will say, "the *renegades paid the penalty, to be sure*".

Oh, no! They did no such thing. The parliament, that is to say, the Boroughmongers, *passed another law*, to prevent these renegades, these scandalous violators of the law, these base hypocrites, from paying the penalty! And, then they passed other acts to protect the renegades in their absence from their *sworn* duty! This (the whole account of which I shall state in my history of the Church) was one of the most infamous acts of that infamous body of men. It was an *ex post facto law*, because it *punished Mr. Williams*, by throwing heavy expences on him. And, it was a base *perversion* of a great and important law.

Such a thing never could have been done in an honest parliament; in a parliament chosen by the people; and, the Clergy, knowing this, would have obeyed the law of Henry the Eighth, and, of course, resided on their benefices.

The same law of Henry the Eighth provided, that the beneficed Clergy should not be farmers of rented lands, nor sell and buy cattle or other thing, in the way of trade; and, for this reason, that they should attend constantly to their duty, and should not be exposed to the temptations of traffick. If this law had been duly adhered to, Baker would not now rent a farm in addition to his glebe, and would not

be one of the most tricky cattle jobbers in the county. He is horse-dealer, cattle-dealer, sheep-jobber, pig-poker, old-clothes man, and quack-doctor, in which last capacity he *contracted* to cure the poor in the parish work-house of the itch for *five pounds*, which he received, and which transaction is recorded in the parish-books.

Thus, my good neighbours, the disgraces and mischiefs arising from the bad character and from the misconduct of the Clergy, arise, as all our other calamities do, from the corruptions of the parliament; and those corruptions arise from the want of a Reform in the Commons', or People's House. Therefore, without such Reform, we must continue to be subject to all the degradation and misery, which press, every day, more and more heavily upon us.

I am, your sincere friend,
WM. COBBETT.

The next REGISTER will contain a Letter to MORRIS BIRKBECK, Esq. being an Examination of his two Works, entitled "*Notes on a Journey in America*" and "*Letters from the Illinois*;" proving that those Works are calculated to produce great Disappointment, and even Misery and Ruin, to those unfortunate Englishmen who are seduced by them to emigrate to the Illinois Territory.

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